

# Understanding Fake Clinics: A Guide for Youth & Schools\*

## What are Fake Clinics?

**Fake clinics, formerly called "crisis pregnancy centers" or "CPCs" are organizations whose primary mission is to manipulate and trick pregnant people into not having abortions.** They prey on the most vulnerable people, often youth and people of color, by paying for advertisements when people search the terms "pregnancy" or "abortion," and offering free sonograms and "abortion counseling" designed to highlight abortion "risks" to delay a termination decision until it's too late. Fake clinics are often funded by or affiliated with antiabortion nonprofits or religious groups. Since they are fake clinics, they may not be required to follow safety or privacy regulations and can legally trick, manipulate and lie to pregnant people to try and scare them out of having an abortion, even if that person has decided for themselves that they want to have the procedure. **Fake Clinics outnumber legitimate clinics 3:1**, use intentionally deceiving names like Women's Resource Center, Positive Choices or Hope Women's Center, and typically locate themselves literally next door to or across the street from real clinics or places where there are many young people, such as college campuses.

**There are over 2,500 fake clinics across the U.S.** and there is likely one in your community. You can find the Fake Clinics near your school and learn more about them at [Crisis Pregnancy Center Map](#).

## Now that You Know, What Can You Do?

There are several ways to slow the harm and trauma of fake clinics in your community. They are:

1. Prevent them from guest speaking at your school to promote their fake clinic or teach abstinence only sex ed.
2. Remove them from your referral lists that a school counselor or nurse might use for students who think they are pregnant. Be ready to share referrals to real medical providers, including those that provide abortion.
3. Ensure your students and your peers know these are fake clinics and to avoid them when seeking medical help.

Read below for more information about how to take action on each of these recommendations.

## Why are Fake Clinics Harmful?

Fake Clinics have been widely criticized by medical associations, public health organizations, advocacy groups, and others for **deceptive practices, misrepresenting their services, creating the appearance that they are a comprehensive reproductive health clinic**, and providing false, biased and misleading medical information, especially about abortion. For example, a fake health clinic might say they provide counseling and referrals for all pregnancy options, but in fact, only provide pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, and counseling against abortion. Fake clinics might have mobile vans that offer free ultrasounds so people can “see their babies” and then write things like, “I love you Mommy” on the ultrasound print-out, trying to pressure pregnant people to continue their pregnancy. Other examples of biased and harmful fake medical care include marketing an “abortion pill reversal” which is not medically possible and very dangerous.

**Many medical associations also warn against fake clinics.** In 2024, the American Medical Association released a policy urging entities to “provide complete, non-directive, medically accurate health information to support patients’ informed, voluntary decisions.”



Image showing a pregnancy center bus parked outside of a licensed medical center in NJ. Image from the Jersey Bee, found at: <https://jerseybee.org/2024/10/31/anti-abortion-centers-take-on-appearance-of-health-clinics-target-people-seeking-abortion-care-in-new-jersey/>

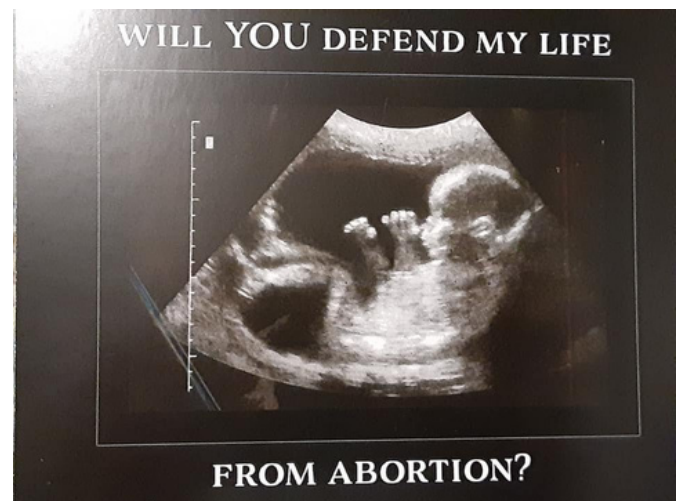


Image taken from the Facebook page of a Fake Clinic.

## Why Fake Clinics Target Schools & Impact Instruction

Fake Clinics often offer abstinence-only-until-marriage programs (now commonly known as “sexual risk avoidance” programs) and approach local schools or districts to be guest speakers or implement a “sex ed” or “pregnancy prevention” program. Within 9 states, and likely many more that we are not



Image from Heartbeat International, found at:

<https://www.heartbeatinternational.org/go/item/2853-abortion-pill-reversal-has-saved-6-000-lives-despite-big-abortion-s-attempts-to-discredit-science-behind-it>

aware of, 17% of the Fake Clinics reported they offered “sexuality-related programming” and 8% indicated they provided these services off-site, including in public schools. **These groups receive millions of dollars in federal and state funding** through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a federally-funded program that helps low income families with children, or through “ProLife” license plates. As a result, in many districts these Fake Clinics are offering programs claiming to teach sex education, and offer them at low or no cost. Administrators must be cautious of programs offered by Fake Clinics due to the following reasons:

- Often, presenters from fake clinics have no qualifications to teach sex ed, or have been trained to only present abstinence-only lessons. For example, focusing on the failure rates of common birth control methods, not sharing

information about birth control methods at all, or sharing stigmatizing messages about STIs or having sex. In some abstinence-only presentations and lessons, students are told that having sex is like sharing a piece of gum over and over again, picking up germs from each person along the way.

- **Presenters from fake clinics only present one point of view** rather than providing balanced knowledge and training to all students. For example, explaining that sex and childbearing should only happen in the context of heterosexual marriage. A student in Pennsylvania reported that a Fake Clinic speaker, “encouraged students to avoid holding hands because any touching would make it harder for them to find a life partner by depleting hormones needed to bond couples.”
- Fake Clinics typically are associated with conservative faith communities which often promote a conservative Christian ideology and strict gender norms.
- **Fake Clinics do not use proven educational methods**, but instead present material intended to evoke shock, disgust, fear, shame, or guilt.
- **Fake Clinics use educational materials that are not LGBTQ-inclusive**, and often perpetuate stereotypes about LGBTQ+ people. A Fake Clinic in Washington offers a form of conversion therapy to address “same-sex attraction” and “gender confusion through religion on their website.”

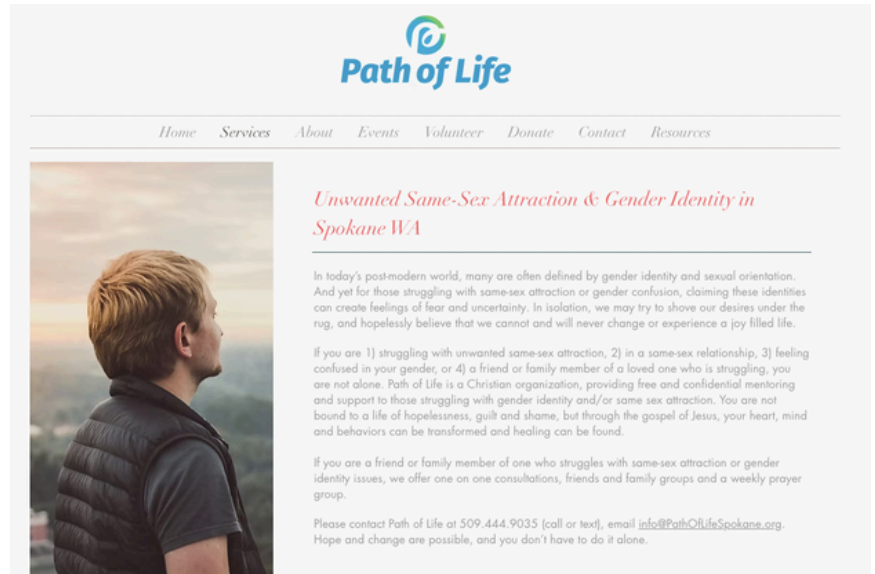
**Famously deceptive, biased, unqualified, and unregulated, Fake Clinics simply have no place in schools.**

Students participating in programs offered by Fake Clinics will not have information they need to make healthy and informed decisions, will not be able to effectively access unbiased medical care, and will be harmed by stigmatizing instruction.

## How to Recognize a Fake Clinic

Fake clinics often use specific language and strategies that indicate that they are not medical providers, even if most information on their promotional materials (i.e. website) says that they are. Often, the volunteers at the fake clinic wear scrubs to give the perception that they have received medical training. Review and vet all materials from potential clinic partners to learn more and determine if the goal of the fake clinic is to deter people from seeking an abortion. If you notice any of the following, it's likely they are a fake clinic and will not provide inclusive, medically-accurate, and non-judgemental information to young people:

- ☒ May be located near a reputable, licensed clinic.
- ☒ Offer free medical services, in particular, pregnancy tests and ultrasounds.
- ☒ Offer free services to pregnant people, such as diapers, baby clothes, or formula.
- ☒ Highlights the "risks" of abortion, both during and after the procedure (i.e. increased risk of cancer or depression). This may also be called "support after abortion" or "post-abortion syndrome."



Screenshot from Path of Life Spokane, found at:

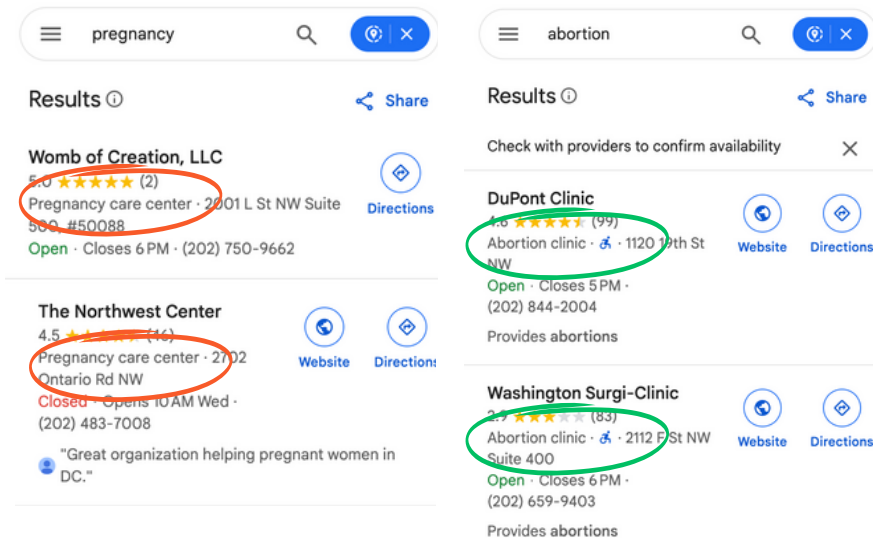
<https://www.pathoflifespokane.org/unwanted-same-sex-attraction>



Image of a state "Choose Life" license plate. Image from Wikipedia:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choose\\_Life\\_license\\_plates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choose_Life_license_plates)

- ☒ Provides information about "abortion pill reversal," which is not supported by medical evidence and not recommended by doctors.
- ☒ May have text at the bottom of their website or other promotional material that says, "We do not provide abortions, or refer for abortions."

- ✓ Does not list any medical providers on their website (most medical websites include a list of their licensed providers).
- ✓ Describes all of their services as “provided in a nonjudgemental setting.”
- ✓ Might be listed as a “pregnancy care center” in a map search online, see below:



If you see any of these indicators, avoid these clinics and instead look for legitimate and licensed providers of care.

## Remove Fake Clinics from Your Referral List

Your school, district, or resource offices may have a list of referrals for outside health care, and that list may include fake clinics. As noted here, the primary goal of fake clinics isn't healthcare, but manipulating pregnant people into not making a fully informed decision for themselves. **They often employ volunteers or underqualified staff to give our incomplete or incorrect information, and they never provide information about birth control or abortion care.** Fake Clinics do not provide quality healthcare and should not be on your district's referral list.

You can find a comprehensive list of CPCs at the following websites:

- Crisis Pregnancy Center Map: [crisispregnancycentermap.com](https://crisispregnancycentermap.com)
- Expose Fake Clinics: <https://www.exposefakeclinics.com/cpc>
- Reproaction Database: <https://reproaction.org/database/>

\*Adapted from Using Outside Speakers to Provide Sex Education: A Toolkit for Educators and School District Administrators by SIECUS, Advocates for Youth, and Cardea